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ON PAGE A1.

WASHINGTON POST
20 October 1986

Soviets Order Expulsion of 5 U.S. Envoys

Move Seen as Response To Forced Reductions in Kremlin's U.N. Staff

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Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, Oct. 19—The Soviet Union today ordered the expulsion of five American diplomats, less than a week after the U.S. ordered withdrawal of 25 Soviet U.N. envoys from the United States was completed.

The Soviet Foreign Ministry, in a statement issued by the official news agency Tass, said four embassy officials and a consular officer in Leningrad had engaged in activities "incompatible with their official status"—a euphemism for espionage charges—and had been asked to leave the country.

A spokesman for the U.S. Embassy would not comment on the expulsion orders, and said only that an embassy representative had been summoned to the Foreign Ministry today to be handed the order.

Today's expulsion orders are the latest round in a series of measures and apparent countermeasures that began in late August with the arrest in New York of a Soviet scientist on spy charges. His arrest was followed by the detention of American journalist Nicholas Daniloff, which in turn led to increased public pressure from Washington for Soviet staff reductions at the United Nations.

The U.S. response to these latest expulsion orders indicates that the Soviet action may be followed by a similar U.S. move, creating new uncertainties and tensions in U.S.-Soviet relations.

In Washington, Secretary of State George P. Shultz said today that the United States "will protest and we will take some action" in response to the expulsion of the

American diplomats. He said the specific U.S. steps will be decided after he consults with President Reagan.

Shultz also said during an interview on NBC-TV's "Meet the Press" today that all 25 Soviet officials who were ordered expelled in March from the Soviet mission at the United Nations have left the country.

"They are people that we feel have some connection with espionage activity or at least are affiliated with units in the Soviet Union that engage in that activity," he said.

White House chief of staff Donald T. Regan, interviewed on CBS-TV's "Face the Nation," said he was "disappointed" by today's expulsions and that the United States is "now going to have to consider taking appropriate action" in response.

The expulsions come at a delicate moment in bilateral relations, within a week after the collapse of arms talks between Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in Reykjavik.

The sudden order follows an apparent effort by the Soviet government earlier this week to enhance its image on human rights issues in the wake of the Reykjavik summit. After lengthy campaigns for exit visas, two Soviet Jews—David Goldfarb and Inessa Fleurov—whose requests to leave the country had attracted widespread support abroad, had their wishes granted.

Today's Tass statement, read on the evening television news, made no link with the U.N. expulsions. Tass said that a "firm protest" had been lodged with the U.S. Embassy in connection with the activities of the U.S. diplomats:

"The attention of the U.S. Embassy was again drawn to facts of the continuing use of American diplomatic missions in the U.S.S.R. for illegal activities against the Soviet Union, and the demand was made that appropriate measures be taken for stopping them."

Tass identified the expellees by name only and did not list their positions. The U.S. Embassy lists the five diplomats as William Norville, a first secretary, Charles Ehrenfried, a third secretary, Gary Lonnquist and David Harris, attaches, and Jack Roberts, from the U.S. Consulate in Leningrad. It was not known when the five would leave.

Three other American diplomats have been expelled from Moscow since June 1985. In none of those cases did Washington retaliate publicly.

When Washington said on Sept. 17 that it would force the departure of Soviet staff from the United Nations, several Soviet officials—including Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze—indicated that Moscow would take an appropriate response.

From the beginning, the Soviets have objected to the American demand to reduce their U.N. staff, calling it a violation of the 1947 agreement establishing the United States as the host country of the international body.

The original demand for phased reductions of Soviet staff at the United Nations was issued in March, when the Reagan administration described the mission as "a nest of spies." The first stage involved a reduction of 25 Soviet staff members by Oct. 1, bringing the level to 218.

As a furor mounted over the Soviet arrest of Daniloff, Washington presented the names of those it wanted removed from the United Nations, and the U.N. reductions became part of the bargaining over Daniloff's release. Last week, the United States extended its deadline for the departure of the last group of five Soviets until today. The United Nations reported that all had left as of Oct. 16.

This week at the Foreign Ministry, spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov said that the level of Soviet staff was now at 198—below the 218 level.

He noted that staff reductions were going on all over the Soviet Union, not just at the United Nations. "We are solving it, without any hints from outside," he said.

Gerasimov's comments had suggested that Moscow was willing to accept the reductions, and would choose not to disturb relations. A senior western diplomat last week also indicated that the situation had been resolved.

One of Moscow's problems is that there are no employees of international agencies here whose status could be equated to that of U.N. employees.

*Washington Post staff writer
Edward Walsh contributed to this
report in Washington.*

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